

**ARIZONA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT
HABITAT PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE
HABITAT ENHANCEMENT AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PROPOSAL**

Game Branch / HPC Project Number: 14-503

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project Title: Buckhorn Prescribed Burn

Region and Game Management Unit: Region 5/Unit 33

Local Habitat Partnership Committee (LHPC):
Tucson

Was the project presented to the LHPC?

YES[X]* **NO**[]

*Original project was presented to LHPC in 2008

Has this project been submitted in previous years? **YES**[X] **NO**[]

If Yes, was it funded? **YES**[X] **NO**[] **Funded HPC Project #(s):** 08-502

Project Type: Prescribed Burn

Brief Project Summary: The Buckhorn Rx Burn will be the fourth prescribed burn effort in a planned series of 8 within the Redington Pass area of the Santa Catalina Ranger District. Total area planned for treatment is 44,750 acres. The first burn was the Chimney Rx Burn (2001; 8,100 acres). It was multi-funded between the City of Tucson, the grazing permittee and the Forest Service. The second Rx burn was the Agua Caliente Rx Burn (2008; 11,194 acres); HPC funds (\$40K) were used in conjunction Forest dollars to accomplish this effort. The third burn is a joint Forest Service-National Park Service effort (North Slope, 9,840 acres). North Slope has yet to be treated due to feasibility and logistical requirements. The Buckhorn Rx Burn encompasses 4,515 acres. Previous proposals for the Buckhorn Rx Burn included about 2,000 additional acres in state and private lands, but were dropped due to projected riparian area impacts; about 1,300 acres of Forest lands were also excluded due to Wilderness conflicts. The Buckhorn Rx Burn will be another landscape scale burn similar to the Agua Caliente Rx Burn.

Big Game Wildlife Species to Benefit: Coues whitetail, mule deer, turkey, quail, mountain lion, bear, javalina and various non-game species such as reptiles, neotropical birds and birds of prey.

Implementation Schedule (Month/Day/Year):

Project Start Date: April 2015*

Project End Date: May 2017*

*Subject to appropriate burning window

Environmental Compliance:

NEPA Completed: **Yes**[X] **No**[] **N/A**[]

Projected Completion Date: October 1, 2009

State Historic Preservation Office - Archaeological Clearance:

Yes[X] **No**[] **N/A**[]

Projected Completion Date: HRR #2009-05-045 April 2009

Arizona Game and Fish Department EA Checklist: **N/A**[X]

To be Completed by: _____

Projected Completion Date: _____

PROJECT FUNDING

Special Big Game License Tag Funds Requested: \$ 40,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds: \$ 83,000

Total Project Costs: \$ 123,000

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION		
Applicant (please print): Stan Helin, Santa Catalina District Ranger	Address: 5700 N. Sabino Canyon Rd. Tucson, AZ 85750	E-mail: shelin@fs.fed.us
Telephone: 520-760-2306		Date: 08/28/2014
AGFD Contact and Phone No. (If applicant is not AGFD personnel): Ruth Gregory, 623-236-7349		
Project has been coordinated with: Arizona Game and Fish Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Pima County, Private		

NEED STATEMENT – PROBLEM ANALYSIS:

The Buckhorn Rx Burn was proposed and funded in 2008, but due to lack of appropriate burning windows, the project has not yet been completed. The Forest completed line preparation in 2008 and maintained line prep in 2014. The Coronado National Forest and FS Regional Office also funded the Buckhorn Rx Burn in 2014, but again, the lack of burning window did not allow for implementation. The Forest has already spent time and money on this project and has a great amount of interest in its successful completion. Arizona Game and Fish Department also has expressed interest in the resubmittal of the Buckhorn Rx Burn proposal.

The Buckhorn phase of the Redington Pass project is primarily for wildlife habitat improvement to address declining wildlife habitat conditions within the project area. A concurrent benefit will be realized as current fuel loads are decreased, reducing the risk of catastrophic wildfire.

Action is needed to remove unusual accumulations of decadent desert scrub/chaparral species to improve the browse and forage conditions that currently exist. At present, existing vegetation and browse species are mature to decadent with a declining trend and have matured to a point of being out of reach of wild ungulates. Yet, these plants are competitive for limited moisture. Without an adequate understory of grasses, forbs and younger, more vigorous browse species present in the community, only the existing, older and well established species benefit when moisture is available.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The project objectives are to:

- Improve the availability of forage and vigor of decadent stands of browse to improve habitat for whitetail in particular but also benefit the other wildlife species in this large area;
- Improve the ecological health within the local vegetation community by re-establishing an earlier seral stage within the project area;
- Continue the process of re-introducing fire to the ecosystem on a gradual basis and reduce the probability of severe, high-risk and catastrophic wildfires; and
- Gradually decrease the unusually high concentration of southwestern chaparral that has accumulated.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION AND STRATEGIES:

Implementation of the prescribed burn will likely occur in early April through early June or during the fall to early winter months depending on when burn conditions are favorable to meet project objectives. Ignition will be conducted by hand and with the aid of a helicopter.

The prescribed fire treatments for each burn block will be implemented in accordance with the burn plan which will be on file at the Santa Catalina Ranger District office.

The size of the project and each burn block is illustrated below:

<u>BURN BLOCK</u>	<u>ACRES</u>	<u>OWNERSHIP</u>
1. Chimney Rock	8,100	USFS – Complete 2001
2. Agua Caliente	11,194	USFS – Complete 2008
3. North Slope	2,988	NPS – Pending
	719	USFS – Pending
4. Buckhorn	4,515	USFS – Planned 2015

PROJECT LOCATION:

The project is located in Township 13 South, Range 17 East (Sections 12, 13, 14, 15, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, and 27) and Range 18 East (Sections 18, 19, 20, and 30) on the Santa Catalina Ranger District, Pima County, Arizona (see map).

LAND OWNERSHIP AT THE PROJECT SITE(S):

(if the project area is private property, please state specifically and provide the landowner's name)

The Buckhorn Rx Burn is adjacent to Arizona State Trust, Pima County (A7 Ranch), and private (Arizona Sunshine Ranches, Inc.) lands, but does not include private property.

IF PRIVATE PROPERTY, IS THERE A COOPERATIVE BIG GAME STEWARDSHIP or LANDOWNER AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LANDOWNER AND THE DEPARTMENT?

YES[] NO[] N/A[X]

HABITAT DESCRIPTION:

The overall project area comprises desert grassland, desert scrub, broadleaf woodland and chaparral. All of the proposed units include extensive areas of grass mixed with a variety of trees including oak, juniper and mesquite. There are also numerous areas of rock outcrop that support little or no vegetation within each of the unit areas. Soil condition is generally satisfactory.

ITEMIZED USE OF FUNDS:

Item	Number	Days/hours	Cost/day	Amount
Ignition Crew	2	3	\$2,000	\$12,000
Holding Crew	2	4	\$3,500	\$28,000
Type 6 Engine Crew	5	4	\$1,000	\$20,000
Dozer Rental to Prep Roads	1	5	\$400	\$2,000
Transport for Dozer	1	2	\$250	\$500
Safety Officer	1	5	\$350	\$1,750
Type 3 Helicopter	1	12	\$1,000	\$12,000
Water Tender	1	5	\$1,500	\$7,500
Medical Unit	1	5	\$1,000	\$5,000
Engine Type 3	2	4	\$1,000	\$8,000
Dip Tank Set up	1	2	\$1,500	\$3,000
Line Prep	1	5	\$3,000	\$15,000
Fuel	1	5	\$350	\$1,750
Ping Pong Balls	10,000	NA	NA	\$2,500
Misc Expenses	1	1	\$3,000	\$3,000
Monitoring	1	1	\$1,000	\$1,000
Total to Implement Buckhorn Rx Burn				\$123,000
<i>Per Acre Cost to Implement</i>				<i>\$27.25/acre</i>

Special Big Game License Tag Funds

\$40,000

Cost Share or Matching Funds (*for volunteer labor rates please refer to the worksheet below*)

\$83,000

LIST COOPERATORS AND DESCRIBE POTENTIAL PARTICIPATION:

As noted above there are 5 landownership's within the overall project area with coordination occurring between them. We have not sought other outside funds as yet. The current hope is to receive the funds applied for in this application with the balance being covered with Forest Service funds.

WOULD IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PROJECT ASSIST IN PROVIDING, MAINTAINING, OR FACILITATING RECREATIONAL ACCESS?

YES[] NO[X] N/A[]

PROJECT MONITORING PLAN:

Several survey plots have been established within the proposed burn area to establish existing vegetation composition. Additional transects will be established prior to treatment to estimate typical browse height and canopy cover.

During treatment the project area will be mapped according to fire severity; no fire, low, moderate and high fire severity. Transects will be read within the various fire severity areas to determine if treatment objectives were achieved. Additionally, photo points will be established to show the effects of treatment.

PROJECT MAINTENANCE:

Initial burns are to be followed with maintenance burns every six to twelve years thereafter to ensure fire is present and able to play its natural role in the ecosystem. Findings from vegetation and wildlife monitoring efforts will be used to determine when maintenance burns are warranted.

PROJECT COMPLETION REPORT TO BE FILED BY:

Santa Catalina Ranger District, Coronado National Forest.

WATER DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS *(please use the worksheet below):*

N/A

TREE CLEARING/REMOVAL PROJECTS *(please use the worksheet below):*

N/A

